



Meet more of the Alderbrook Family:

[Jim May: Culinary Director](#)

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George and Dorothy Gillemot

Owners

To some, owning a vineyard and winery is a labor of love, to others it's a savvy investment. For George Gillemot, it was both of these, plus an opportunity to live and work in one of the most picturesque spots in the world.

To understand how an engineer and telecommunications mogul ends up owning a backroad winery, it helps to understand the "can do" attitude that has been passed down from one Gillemot generation to the next. It started with George's father who grew up in Budapest, Hungary during World War I. Wounded in battle, he was taken to a prison camp in Siberia where he faced certain death from overwork and starvation. Yet the resourceful elder Gillemot convinced his captors that he was a cook (despite never having been one). Working in the kitchen, he managed to survive the war and eventually immigrated to New York, where he bought a motorcycle and headed west to seek his fame and fortune in California.

His son, George, was born, raised and educated in the city of Santa Monica. He graduated from UCLA with a degree in Business Administration and later with an MBA. During World War II, George enlisted as a Navy pilot and was stationed in Alameda, Norfolk, and eventually at Barber's Point in Hawaii. Discharged in 1945, George soon met Dorothy, and the two were married in 1946. It was at this time that he got a job working for a telephone company in Santa Monica, known then as the Associated Telephone Company (it would later become GTE). For 18 years, George worked his way up the corporate ladder, finally becoming a Methods Engineer who specialized in solving problems. In 1974, he came up with a unique closing device for covering spliced cables. After GTE refused to patent the invention, George took his idea and started his own company. During the next ten years, the company, Communications Technology, grew into a large international telecommunications equipment manufacturer.

"In 1984, I was made an offer to sell the company that I couldn't refuse," said George. He and Dorothy took the proceeds from the sale and tried the leisurely life of retirement. They purchased a home near Lake Tahoe, traveled, and dabbled in a variety of investments. Then in 1991, a conversation with neighbor Mark Rafanelli led George in a new direction. It turned out that Rafanelli was a partner in the Alderbrook Vineyard and Winery and that he and the other owners were considering the possibility of selling the property. The thought of living and working amidst the beauty of Sonoma County was appealing to George and the investment opportunity also held considerable allure. After a bit of negotiation, George purchased the vineyard and winery but decided to lease back the winemaking operation to the original partners. The arrangement held up until 1994 when a variety of troubles forced the original partners to abandon the winery. George, whose only related winery experience has been as an investor in Schramsberg Winery back in 1975, knew it would be foolish to tackle the challenge without expert help. He developed a strategy that put together a top-flight team of seasoned pros to run the operation for him. By recruiting experts like General Manager John McClelland, George made a real commitment to building Alderbrook into a world class winery.

In recent years, George has built upon his commitment to excellence by financing new production and barrel storage facilities, upgrading the winery's cooperage program, and expanding the hospitality and office spaces. "The sky's the limit" says George when asked about the winery's future. "The plan is not so much about quantity, but to consistently produce quality wines that everyone can enjoy," he adds. So far, the Alderbrook wines have captured more than 200 medals and have gained wide appreciation throughout the United States and Europe.

Today, George and his wife, Dorothy (who serves as the vineyard and winery's comptroller), divide their time between their Tahoe home and their cottage at the vineyard. "Nothing is finer after putting in a full day than relaxing in the evening, enjoying the spa, the beautiful scenery and a glass of our Chardonnay," says George. It sounds like a recipe for a long and happy life.

Jim May

Culinary Director

Jim May has enjoyed a lengthy familiarity with fine wines and good food. His grandparents, who were originally from France, began letting Jim sip wine in the European tradition at the tender age of 8.

Jim's French heritage combined with this early introduction to the fruit of the vine led him to an interest in the culinary arts and he subsequently began his first job in a restaurant at 19. At this time, he was living in southern California and first worked at Scandia in Hollywood, followed by a position with The Chronicle restaurant in Pasadena.

A sense that "northern California held more promise" along with a serendipitous chance meeting which arose while en route to visit his brother in Seattle led to Jim's relocation to the Napa Valley in 1980 where he opened the St. George restaurant in St. Helena (now Tre Vigne). After serving as chef there for two years, Jim left somewhat reluctantly for a hard-to-resist opportunity to coordinate the kitchen setup, menu creation, and oversee the grand opening of the fine dining restaurant of the Marriott Hotel in Maui. While he enjoyed his time in Hawaii during the next several years, he was nevertheless enthusiastic about returning to Wine Country when he accepted a position offered by Auberge du Soleil in the Napa Valley in the early 80's. Concurrent with his duties at the restaurant, Jim also worked closely with the owners of Cakebread Cellers in Rutherford, initiating the winery's first food and wine pairings, creating recipes, overseeing their culinary program including conducting cooking classes and helping host their annual Harvest Workshop.

In 1994, Jim and his wife briefly considered relocating once again, toying with the idea of becoming innkeepers. But it was 28° F. in Vermont just then and so their exploratory jaunt ultimately led them no further than to equally chilly Santa Fe. They turned around, came back, and are now content to call Sonoma County "home".

At this juncture, Alderbrook Winery hired Jim to serve as their Culinary Coordinator. As an ardent enthusiast for the abundance of fresh, locally-grown produce, Jim enjoys heading up the winery's very successful "*Bounty of Sonoma County Program*" which incorporates local food products into recipes specifically created to compliment Alderbrook's full line of award-winning wines. The program underscores Alderbrook's philosophy which celebrates the marriage of good food with fine wine and introduces the consumer to the possibilities of each.

In February of 1996, Jim participated in the creation of a new offering to the public who are welcome visitors to Alderbrook's tasting room ~ *Saturday Cookin'*. Each week, a varietal is selected for showcasing and a tasty, but simple-to-prepare accompaniment is made available on a complimentary basis to the winery's visitors. This ongoing event, hosted from 11-3 each Saturday is currently being offered to ever-increasing numbers of guests each week. Samples of the featured food and wine are made available as well as that week's recipe, questions are answered, and the public is delighted to chat with someone of Jim's culinary stature.

All in all, Jim is very pleased with the direction in which the winery is going and feels that Alderbrook's fine, handcrafted wines are a perfect compliment to the luscious foods produced in this glorious local region. He personally adheres to the belief, "If they grow together, they will taste good together" and works closely with local farmers and producers who offer him an incredible range from which to compose his symphonies of food and wine. A man who enjoys fresh, natural products and the synergistic way in which a fine vintage enhances good food, Jim embodies Alderbrook's sincere commitment to "the good life."

John McClelland

General Manager

John McClelland originally hails from New York City but he was predominately raised in southern California where he attended Hollywood High School and later UCLA.

John's first job following college was with the Hollywood Citizen News where he handled advertising for several chain grocery stores. He left the newspaper business to accept a position working for Robert Mondavi who was, himself, then employed by Charles Krug Winery. After serving for a year as Southern California Sales Manager for Charles Krug Winery, John moved on to begin a lengthy association with Almaden Winery. Initially, he accepted a position as District Sales Manager in Los Angeles, but was subsequently promoted through the years to National Sales Manager, Vice President of Sales, Vice President of Marketing, and ultimately served at the helm as Almaden's President for seven years. After 25 years, John decided he needed a new challenge. He left Almaden to serve as Chairman of the Board and President of Geyser Peak Winery where he productively spent the next 9 years.

At this point, John decided to retire and he and his wife enjoyed a welcome period of leisure punctuated with regular tennis matches

for a little over a year. After a while though, John was not only restless to work again but said retirement was "just too darn expensive!" A friend of John's was acquainted with Alderbrook's new owner, George Gillemot, and "he put the two of us together." A strong partnership was thus born. George was pleased to avail himself of John's broad expertise in the business of winemaking and so it was that John joined Alderbrook as General Manager where he has served with enthusiasm since early 1994.

John is particularly challenged by working for a smaller winery now and notes the precision in today's national wine market requires "the fine tuning of a clock" for a producer the size of Alderbrook. He is optimistic overall about the winery's future and, from the vantage point of one who has written for the wine industry over the years in publications such as *Gastronomique International*, John is also a proponent of the emerging trend toward creating quality table wine. Experimentation with lesser known varietals including Syrah or Shiraz are also being looked to as an additional compliment to Alderbrook's solid base in premium varietals. Overall, John, too, is committed to producing wines of distinction which everyone can afford and enjoy.

His love of wine led to his involvement with The Wine Institute over the years where he previously served as Chairman. He was also a Supreme Knight of the Vine and has belonged to the *Chine Des Rotisseurs*.

Nowadays, tennis has been replaced by tending to landscaping the grounds of the new home he and Ann recently moved to. Retirement is no longer on the immediate horizon for John. He thinks it's better to be engaged in fulfilling work, with a good glass of old vine Zin waiting to be savored at the end of a satisfying day. . .

Kristi Koford

Winemaker

Alderbrook Winery is pleased to welcome **Kristi Koford** aboard as Winemaker as of July, 1997, having served as Consulting Winemaker to the winery during the month of June. This interim period gave us a chance to fully appreciate Kristy's talents as well as allowing her to have a good look at us. Everyone liked what they saw and so we're delighted to begin this newest chapter in Alderbrook's continuing story. Please allow us to introduce her now to you...

While Kristy was born in Berkeley, California, she was predominately raised outside of the U.S. as her father worked as a wildlife zoologist -- however, the family did return to the States in time for Kristy to spend her high school years in Davis. Following college as a biology major at UC Santa Cruz, she was initially drawn in a preliminary way to what would become her vocation when she participated in vineyard work for a time. Later, Kristy had the opportunity to join the staff at Robert Mondavi Winery where she worked for ten years, eventually serving as Senior Enologist after returning to college at UC Davis for coursework in Wine Microbiology, etc.

In 1984, Kristy decided to devote herself fully to domestic pursuits when she and her husband, Ranny, became the proud parents of their son, Griffin. In the midst of new motherhood, she and Ranny also undertook the arduous personal construction of their hand-hewn home in the hills above Oakville in Napa County. But after four busy, family-focused years, she was ready to resume her burgeoning wine career (and her blisters had finally healed!).

St. Supery Vineyards in Napa was just being launched at that time and Kristy joined the staff there in 1988, initially working in the lab. Later, as Assistant Winemaker for St. Supery, she was challenged by the stimulating diversity of requests from the winery's roster of clients for whom they produced 200,000 cases of negociant wines annually. In addition to sharpening her winemaking skills and learning to cater to a wide variety of "style" requests, this job also played to her strength of team-building as she was highly involved in a range of hands-on duties, all critical to the ultimate goal of a happy customer.

And now, having been richly seasoned by life, love, and the tutelage of others (including Zelma Long and Tim Mondavi in years past), Kristy is imbued with characteristics befitting a fine wine herself -- including an emphasis on achieving the best from one's own nature. Her budding affiliation with Alderbrook will bring a host of fresh and welcome challenges her way including working with new microclimates and appellations. While she was familiar with many Sonoma County wines, she's now noted with enthusiasm the open, friendly nature of Sonoma County's vintner community and is looking forward to becoming a part of this vibrant, world-class assemblage of winemaking artisans.

As to the wine itself, Kristy especially enjoys working with Zinfandel and Pinot Noir, her personal favorites, but is also challenged by Chardonnay's unique malleability. "It's so interesting how some varietals require the winemaker to almost be nothing more than a steward of the fruit while Chardonnay offers a chance to be so creative." Kristy strives to produce wine that is "fruit driven, meaning that it is simply complimented by the characteristics of the oak -- like oak's spice..." Her goal is to continue to refine and enhance Alderbrook's current roster of varietals and she will also be working very closely with Jerry Quirk in the vineyards from whom she senses she will learn much.

Overall, Kristy has a simple yet compelling philosophy: "the winemakers' (and I mean everyone who helps make the wine!) collective job is to preserve the essence of the fruit from the vines and, while there is definitely "technique" involved, more importantly there is attitude: caring about each other and the wines -- creating an environment where good things grow... good friendships, good wine, and the positive energy imparted to the wine will then ultimately be passed along to that lucky person who eventually opens the bottle." We couldn't agree more, Kristy. Stay tuned, folks...!

Robert Weinstock

Vineyard Manager

It may say New York on his birth certificate, but California has always been home to **Robert Weinstock**, Alderbrook's new Vineyard Manager. Having been raised in the Los Angeles area, Robert's family moved to Northern California in the early 70's, acquiring a vineyard in Dry Creek Valley. Robert became active in the business early on and thrived in learning all aspects of vineyard development. Having subsequently studied viticulture locally, in 1984 he founded Weinstock Cellars, the first premium Sonoma County Kosher winery featuring varietals. For close to nine years, he served as an active hands-on President of the firm which grew to produce 30,000+ cases annually of their own as well as private label Kosher wine until he sold the operation in 1993.

At that time, Robert's mother was in need of his help with her garment manufacturing business and so he returned to the southland, once again living in Los Angeles County where he'd grown up. He spent the next four years serving as Executive Vice President of Operations for Susan Burrowes, Ltd., broadening his managerial skills for the burgeoning family enterprise which employed over 100 people and generated revenues of up to \$18M annually. Frequent trips to Healdsburg to oversee family farming interests during this hiatus from Sonoma County helped him deal with his homesickness and allowed him to at least briefly exchange a sprawl of spreadsheets for a view of sprawling hillside vineyards.

This year, Robert was finally able to return to his beloved Sonoma County along with his wife, Diane, and their three children.

In assuming the vineyard management for Alderbrook, Robert first acknowledges that his predecessor certainly had everything in fine order before passing the reins over to him. Especially because of his own winemaking experience, he plans to work closely with Winemaker Kristi Koford to further enhance the growth and recognition of Alderbrook's premium roster of wines.

Having begun farming in Dry Creek Valley some 20 years ago, he notes, "Although there's been much experimentation as the local wine industry has expanded and begun to grow up; it's funny that many of the old ways are being embraced anew including Italian styles of plantings, for example." Another "old" method Robert respects is the use of Mother Nature's helping hand in utilizing natural predators to abate pests, always an ongoing challenge in vineyard management. Efficiency meets charm as Alderbrook uses nesting boxes to enhance regional bluebird activity in Alderbrook's vineyards. On the flip side, the winery also employs cutting edge computer-based technology to monitor soil/vineyard conditions resulting in the most practical and profitable approach to their stewardship of the land which is taken seriously indeed.

Robert is already actively involved in acquisition of additional land for Alderbrook to cultivate and there are plans to produce a new Rosé program in a dry French style, expand Pinot production, and expand the OVOC Zinfandel, as well.

Nowadays, Robert revels in trodding the soil of Dry Creek Valley each morning, freshly appreciative of the privilege of living and working in the midst of such beauty. "Finally being back in Sonoma County... every day I smell the wet...the clean...the dirt. Driving into work, I'm born again, it's as simple as that. I love truly being home again!" We'll raise a glass of Zinfandel and toast along with you on that one, Robert!